

# PREPARING FOR THE NATURAL DISASTER

**While most disasters cannot be avoided, there are things people can do to lessen the loss of life and property damage.**

The following is a list of frequently asked questions about natural disasters:

## **Should I stay at home or should I try to evacuate?**

- Depending on your circumstances and the nature of the disaster, the first important decision is whether you stay where you are or try to leave the area. Plan for both possibilities. Use common sense and available information, including what you are learning here, to determine if there is immediate danger.
- Monitor TV or radio news reports for information or official instructions as they become available. Sometimes in an emergency, information and instructions are not available immediately. Again, if there is no available information **assess the situation, use common sense** and use whatever you have on hand to take care of yourself and your family.

## **BASIC EMERGENCY KIT**

### **What are our basic needs?**

When you are putting together a supply kit it is best to think about you and your family's basic needs first. **Basic needs are clean, drinkable water, food, breathable, clean air and shelter/warmth.**

### **What should I put in a basic emergency kit?**

You should stock six basics: ***water, food, first aid kit, clothing and bedding, tools, and special items (like baby formula, medication, and diapers).*** Keep the items that you would most likely need during an evacuation in an easy-to-carry container. Possible containers include backpacks, duffel bags and storage containers with two handles. Follows is a list of basics:

### **WATER**

Remember the special needs of your family members. **Infants, the elderly and persons with disabilities** need the same planning as everyone else, and sometimes a little more, to be prepared for a natural disaster.

### **FOOD**

Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking, and little or no water. If you must heat food, pack a can of sterno. Do not forget baby formula (store extra water that has been boiled to mix the formula) or other special needs. Select food items that are compact and lightweight.

## **BASIC EMERGENCY SUPPLIES INCLUDE:**

**Flashlight** and extra **batteries**, battery powered **radio** and extra **batteries**, plastic **garbage bags**, ties, **first aid kit**, **map** of the area for evacuation or for locating shelters, a **whistle** to signal for help, a **sleeping bag** for each person, a **change of clothing**, that is appropriate for the weather outside, for each person, several **candles** and packs of **matches in a waterproof** container (If there has been an explosion or any chance that a gas line may have ruptured avoid using open flame), and a **Non-electric can opener**, utility knife.

## **What type of container should I store my emergency kit in?**

- Keep the items that you would most likely need during an evacuation in an easy-to-carry container. Possible containers include:
  - Backpacks,
  - Duffel bags and,
  - A plastic garbage can with two handles.

## **PUTTING A KIT TOGETHER** **WATER**

### **How should I store my water?**

*Storing water is one of the most important things you can do. In an emergency, pipes may be broken or the water contaminated. (Contaminated means it is not safe to drink).*

- Store water in plastic containers such as soft drink bottles. Avoid using containers that will decompose or break, such as milk cartons or glass bottles.)
- Stored water needs to be treated to make sure it will be safe to drink when you need it.
  - You can do this by adding four drops of bleach per quart of water.
    - The liquid bleach should have 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite and **NO SOAP!**
- Seal all bottles tightly so they don't leak.

### **How much water should I store?**

- Store one gallon of water per person per day (two quarts for drinking, two quarts for food preparation/sanitation)
- Keep at least a three-day supply of water for each person in your household.
  - You need to multiply one-gallon times the number of people in your house and then multiply that number by three to get the total gallons you'll need.
  - A normally active person needs to drink at least two quarts of water each day.
  - Hot environments and intense physical activity can double that amount.
  - Children, nursing mothers and ill people will need more.
- Every six months you should change your water supply.
- Don't forget extra water for your pets!

### **How much and what types of food should I put in my emergency kit?**

- *The food should be kept dry and cool. Cookies, crackers and other items should be put in plastic bags.*
- *Choose foods your family will eat.*
- **Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food.** Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking, and little or no water. If you must heat food, pack a can of sterno. Select food items that are compact and lightweight.

- **Beverages** - canned juices, milk, soup (if powdered or condensed, store extra water)
- **Staples**--sugar, salt, pepper
- **High-energy foods**--peanut butter, jelly, crackers, granola bars, trail mix nutrition bars, beef jerky, dried fruits and meats, nuts, dry cereal, ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables, and protein or fruit bars
- **Vitamins**
- **Comfort/stress foods**--cookies, hard candy, sweetened cereals, lollipops, instant coffee, and tea bags
- **Infant Formula** (store extra water that has been boiled to mix the formula); Ensure; Protein Shakes
- **Matches** in a waterproof container, **Non-electric can opener, utility knife**

### **What should I do about our pets?**

- Plan for your pets
- **Pets should not be left behind**, but understand that only service animals may be permitted in public shelters. Plan how you will care for your pets in an emergency.

**Store extra food, water and supplies for your pet**

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*

### **What Kind of Clothing and Bedding Should I have in my disaster kit?**

If you live in a cold weather climate, you must think about warmth. It is possible that the power will be out and you will not have heat. **Rethink your clothing and bedding supplies once a year to account for growing children and other family changes.**

Everyone in your house should have a complete change of clothes and a pair of sturdy shoes or boots stored in the disaster kit. You should also have rain gear, thermal underwear and blankets or sleeping bags

- A jacket or coat
- Long pants
- A long sleeve shirt
- Sturdy shoes
- A hat and gloves
- A **sleeping bag** or warm blanket for each person

### **What kind of tools/equipment should I have?**

- Emergency reference material such as a first aid book or a print out of this information
- Mess kits, or paper cups, plates and plastic utensils
- Cash or traveler's checks, change
- Non-electric can opener, utility knife
- Paper towels
- Fire extinguisher: small canister, ABC type
- Tube tent
- Pliers
- Compass
- Matches in a waterproof container

- Aluminum foil
- Plastic storage containers
- Signal flare
- Paper, pencil
- Medicine dropper
- Shut-off wrench, to turn off household gas and water

### **When and why should I turn off my utilities?**

If there is damage to your home or you are instructed to turn off your utilities:

#### **Learn how to turn off utilities:**

- Locate the electric, gas and water shut-off valves.
- Keep necessary tools near gas and water shut-off valves.
- Teach family members how to turn off utilities.

**If you turn the gas off, a professional must turn it back on.  
Do not attempt to do this yourself.**

### **How do I keep my family clean and sanitary?**

*You can use bleach as a disinfectant (diluted nine parts water to one part bleach), or in **an emergency, you can also use it to purify water.** Use 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water, or four drops per quart. **Do not use scented, color safe or bleaches with added cleaners. Do not mix household cleaners because ammonia and bleach emit toxic fumes when mixed together.***

- Toilet paper, towelettes
- Feminine supplies
- Personal hygiene items
- Plastic garbage bags, ties (for personal sanitation uses)
- Plastic bucket with tight lid
- Disinfectant
- Household chlorine bleach

### **What Should I do About Important Family Documents?**

*Keep copies of important family records such as insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container.*

### **What should I have for my baby?**

- Formula
- Diapers
- Bottles
- Powdered milk
- Medications
- Moist towelettes
- Diaper rash ointment

## **Are there any special preparations I should make for my elderly parents?**

*For Adults and seniors:*

- Ask your doctor about storing prescription medications such as heart and high blood pressure medication, insulin and other prescription drugs.
- Denture needs
- Contact lenses and supplies
- Extra eyeglasses
- Plan how you will evacuate or signal for help.
- Plan emergency procedures with home health care agencies or workers.
- Tell others where you keep your emergency supplies.
- Teach others how to operate necessary equipment.
- Label equipment like wheelchairs, canes or walkers.

## **Additional supplies for seniors:**

- List of prescription medications including dosage in your supply kits. Include any allergies
- Extra eyeglasses and hearing-aid batteries
- Extra wheelchair batteries or other special equipment in your supply kit
- A list of the style and serial numbers of medical devices such as pacemakers in your emergency supply kits.
- Copies of medical insurance and Medicare cards
- List of doctors and emergency contacts

## **Are there any special preparations I need to make as a person with disabilities?**

- Create a support network to help in an emergency.
- Tell these people where you keep your emergency supplies.
- Give one member of your support network a key to your house or apartment.
- Contact your city or county government's emergency information management office. Many local offices keep lists of people with disabilities so they can be located quickly in a sudden emergency.
- Wear medical alert tags or bracelets to help identify your disability.
- If you are dependent on dialysis or other life sustaining treatment, know the location and availability of more than one facility.
- Show others how to operate your wheelchair.
- Know the size and weight of your wheelchair, in addition to whether or not it is collapsible, in case it has to be transported.

## **What additional supplies might I need for a person with a disability?**

- Prescription medicines, list of medications including dosage, list of any allergies
- Extra eyeglasses and hearing-aid batteries
- Extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen
- Keep a list of the style and serial number of medical devices
- Medical insurance and Medicare cards
- List of doctors, relatives or friends who should be notified if you are hurt

## **SUGGESTIONS AND REMINDERS**

- Store your kit in a convenient place known to all family members. Keep a smaller version of the Disaster Supplies Kit in the trunk of your car.
- Keep items in airtight plastic bags.
- Change your stored water supply every six months so it stays fresh.
- Rotate your stored food every six months.
- Rethink your kit and family needs at least once a year. Replace batteries, update clothes, etc.

*Ask your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications.*

### **Evacuating**

There may be conditions under which you will decide to get away, or there may be situations when you are ordered to leave. Plan how you will assemble your family and anticipate where you will go. Choose several destinations in different directions so you have options in an emergency.

#### **Create an evacuation plan:**

- **Plan places** where your family will meet, both within and outside of your immediate neighborhood.
- If you have a car, keep at least a **half tank of gas** in it at all times in case you need to evacuate.
- Become familiar with **alternate routes** and other means of transportation out of your area.
- If you **do not have a car**, plan how you will leave if you have to.
- **Take your emergency supply kit** unless you have reason to believe it has been contaminated.
- **Lock** the door behind you.

Take your **pets** with you, but understand that only service animals may be permitted in public shelters. Plan how you will care for your pets in an emergency.

#### **On the Road:**

- Do not drive through a flooded area. If you come upon a flooded road, turn around and go another way. More people drown in their cars than anywhere else.
- Do not walk through flooded areas. As little as six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet.
- Stay away from downed power lines and electrical wires. Electrocutation is another major source of deaths in floods. Electric current passes easily through water.
- Look out for animals - especially snakes. Animals lose their homes in floods, too. They may seek shelter in yours.

[Click here to find out how to protect you and your family.](#)

## **REFERENCES:**

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- 5) Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry Division of Toxicology, 1600 Clifton Road NE, Mailstop E-29, Atlanta, GA 30333 Phone: 1-888-422-8737 FAX: (404)498-0057
- 6) United States Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Environmental Health Radiation Studies 1600 Clifton Rd. Atlanta, GA 30333, U.S.A. Public Inquiries (404) 639-3534, (800) 311-3435  
FEMA 500 C Street, SW Washington, D.C. 20472 Phone: (202) 566-1600

The following is an excerpt from the United States federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) web page.

## **WHAT SHOULD I DO BEFORE A FLOOD?**

### **How to Plan**

Nobody can stop a flood. However, if you are faced with one, there are actions you can take to protect your family and keep your property losses to a minimum.

The most important thing is to make sure your family is safe.

### **Before a Flood**

- Keep a battery-powered radio tuned to a local station, and follow emergency instructions.
- If the waters start to rise inside your house before you have evacuated, retreat to the second floor; the attic, and if necessary, the roof. Take dry clothing, a flashlight and a portable radio with you. Then, wait for help. Don't try to swim to safety; wait for rescuers to come to you.

### **Buy Flood Insurance**

- One of the most important things that you can do to protect your home and family before a flood is to purchase a [flood insurance policy](#).
- You can obtain one through your insurance company or agent. Flood insurance is guaranteed through the [National Flood Insurance Program \(NFIP\)](#), administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Your homeowners insurance does not cover flood damage.
- Don't wait until a flood is coming to purchase your policy. It normally takes 30 days after purchase for a flood insurance policy to go into effect.

- For more information about the NFIP and flood insurance, contact your insurance company or agent, or call the NFIP at **1-888-FLOOD29** or **TDD# 1-800-427-5593**.

**If time permits, here is other steps that you can take before the flood waters come**

- Turn off all utilities at the main power switch and close the main gas valve if evacuation appears necessary.
- Move valuables, such as papers, furs, jewelry, and clothing to upper floors or higher elevations.
- Fill bathtubs, sinks and plastic soda bottles with clean water. Sanitize the sinks and tubs first by using bleach. Rinse, and then fill with clean water.
- Bring outdoor possessions, such as lawn furniture, grills and trashcans inside, or tie them down securely.

## **WHAT SHOULD I DO DURING A FLOOD?**

**Once the flood arrives**

- Do not drive through a flooded area. If you come upon a flooded road, turn around and go another way. More people drown in their cars than anywhere else.
- Do not walk through flooded areas. As little as six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet.
- Stay away from downed power lines and electrical wires. Electrocution is another major source of deaths in floods. Electric current passes easily through water.
- Look out for animals - especially snakes. Animals lose their homes in floods, too. They may seek shelter in yours.

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# **WHAT SHOULD I DO AFTER A FLOOD?**

## **After The Flood**

**At last, the storm has ended and the power is back on. If the power has been out for more than a few hours, you need to check the food in your refrigerator and freezer to make sure that it has not spoiled. If you experienced a flood, extensive cleanup is often necessary.**

[For More Information on Food Safety after the flood please click here and go to page 22 of the PDF file.](#)

- If your home, apartment or business has suffered damage, call the insurance company or agent who handles your flood insurance policy right away to file a claim.
- Before you enter a building, you should check for structural damage. . Don't go in if there is any chance of the building collapsing.
- Upon entering the building, do not use matches, cigarette lighters or any other open flames, since gas may be trapped inside. Instead, use a flashlight to light your way.
- Keep power off until an electrician has inspected your system for safety.
- Floodwaters pick up sewage and chemicals from roads, farms and factories. If your home has been flooded, protect your family's health by cleaning up your house right away. Throw out foods and medicines that may have been exposed to flood water.
- Until local authorities tell you your water supply to be safe, boil water for drinking and food preparation vigorously for five minutes before using.
- Be careful walking around. After a flood, steps and floors are often slippery with mud and covered with debris, including nails and broken glass.
- Take steps to reduce your risk of future floods. Make sure to follow local building codes and ordinances when rebuilding, and use flood-resistant materials and techniques to protect yourself and your property from future flood damage.

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**For more on your food supply, food safety, cooking during a power outage, emergency preparations, emergency generators, utilities, saving household items, evacuating and recovery from the storm click on the following links:**

[Planning for Weathering Floods, Storms, and Power Outages](#)

[Flood Information and fact sheet From FEMA](#)

[FEMA - First Steps After a Flood](#)

[Preparing for High Winds](#)